

The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Easterseals



Addressing the Unique Mental Health Challenges Facing Women Veterans

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Prevalence of Women Veterans

- The US has over 2 million women veterans. Of these:
 - One in four women veterans experience military sexual trauma
 - Female veterans are 4x more likely to be homeless than nonveteran women (Hamilton, 2011)
 - They are six times more likely to die by suicide than women who did not serve

Women at War

- Women in the military have an increasing role
 - 15% of active duty US military
 - 17% reserve and National Guard
 - 20% of new recruits
- Women serving in the military may come under direct fire and experience combat-related injuries and trauma
- Women may also be subject to sexual assault and harassment
 - In addition, some may have experienced trauma prior to service





Stressful Military Experiences

- Combat Experiences
- Military Sexual Trauma
 - Reported by 20-40% of female veterans (Kelly, et al, 2011)
- Separation From Family
 - Deployments
 - Unaccompanied Tours
 - Frequent Moves (away from extended family)
- Reintegration/Readjustment Issues





Women Veterans Mental Health

- Women veterans have an higher incidence of substance use disorder (SUD) – (Booth, et al, 2011)
 - Lifetime SUD is higher for women veterans with a history of sexual assault (64% vs 44%)
- High rates of positive post traumatic stress symptoms, depression, anxiety
 - MST combined with combat exposure increases incidence and impacts civilian readjustment



Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

- Experiences of sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment that a veteran experienced during his or her military service
- Per VA data, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 100 men have reported experiencing MST
- MST is an experience, not a diagnosis, so treatment needs will vary



Barriers to Care

- Access
- Social Stigma
- Cost
- Quality of Care
- Scheduling/Traffic
- Childcare
- * These all contribute to access disparities



Access to Care

- The perception of limited ability to be seen may be influenced in part by unacceptable wait times to receive mental health services (CVN & NCBH, Oct 2018)
- Lack of access to mental health services may discourage people from seeking help



Access to Care

- Patients are also spending significant amounts of time traveling to/from their appointment(CVN & NCBH, Oct 2018)
 - Nearly half (46% of American adults have had to or know someone who has had to travel more than 1 hour roundtrip to receive mental health treatment





Barriers

- Cost
 - Primary barrier to getting mental health services
 - Not all veterans have healthcare benefits or coverage may be limited
- Limited options & lack of awareness
 - Difficulty finding military culturally competent clinicians
 - Few services specific to women veterans
- Social Stigma
 - Warrior Mentality/Perception of Weakness
- Inability to take off from Work





HOW CAN WE ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES?

Holistic Care: Eight Dimensions of Wellness







Evidence-Based Therapies

- Prolonged Exposure Therapy
- Cognitive Processing Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Motivational Interviewing
- Problem Solving Therapy
- Integrative Behavioral Couples Therapy
- Eye Movement Desensitization Therapy



Types of Services – Comprehensive Care

- Individual Counseling
- Couples Therapy
- Family Therapy
- Case Management
- Telehealth
- Medication Management
- Peer to Peer Support Groups
- Skill-Building Workshops/Groups
 - Parenting Workshops
 - Stress Resiliency Classes



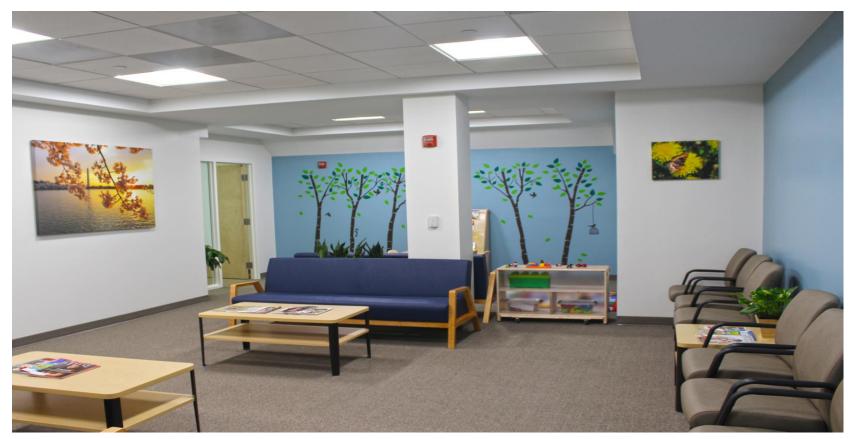


Ecosystem of Services

- Respite Care
- Inclusive Child Development Centers
 - Provide physical, occupational, and speech therapy in the natural environment
 - "Little Warriors Program"
- Adult Day Services
- Veteran Staffing Network
 - Career Coaching
 - Job Placement & Recruiting
- The key is utilization of community resources



Family-Friendly Spaces





Warm Inviting Settings





Resources

- Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Easterseals: www.mfc.eseal.org
- Cohen Veterans Network: <u>www.cohenveteransnetwork.org</u>
- Maryland's Commitment to Veterans: <u>www.veterans.health.Maryland.gov</u>
- National Council for Behavioral Health: <u>www.thenationalcouncil.org</u>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
 - www.samhsa.gov





Resources

- National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention www.theactionalliance.org
- Veterans Benefits Administration <u>www.va.gov</u>
- Vets4Warriors: <u>www.vets4warriors.com</u>
 - **-** 1-855-838-8255
- VA Suicide Hotline
 - **-** 1800-273-8255



